

**From:** [Lee, Judy E.](#)  
**To:** [Lahr, Pat](#); [Wolf, Sheldon](#); [Wolf, Sheldon](#)  
**Subject:** FW: FirstLink SB 2149  
**Date:** Thursday, January 19, 2023 7:36:37 AM

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Sheldon – Please load this into the testimony for 2149.

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**From:** Jennifer Illich <[jenniferi@myfirstlink.org](mailto:jenniferi@myfirstlink.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 9:17 PM  
**To:** Lee, Judy E. <[jlee@ndlegis.gov](mailto:jlee@ndlegis.gov)>; Cleary, Sean <[scleary@ndlegis.gov](mailto:scleary@ndlegis.gov)>; Clemens, David <[dclemens@ndlegis.gov](mailto:dclemens@ndlegis.gov)>; Hogan, Kathy L. <[khogan@ndlegis.gov](mailto:khogan@ndlegis.gov)>; Roers, Kristin <[kroers@ndlegis.gov](mailto:kroers@ndlegis.gov)>; Weston, Kent <[kweston@ndlegis.gov](mailto:kweston@ndlegis.gov)>  
**Subject:** FirstLink SB 2149

Good morning Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I wanted to thank you for your time listening to SB 2149 testimony. I wanted to again let you know how important this bill is for the entire state of North Dakota.

Ten years ago, FirstLink took 1,501 calls directly related to suicide, in 2021 we took 15,465 calls related to suicide. The complexity and volume of our calls have greatly increased. Ten years ago having two-year contracts for grants through the state and the federal government worked for our business model. Now, having our major funding source that is not guaranteed longer than two years is very difficult. It is difficult to increase our staff FTE with a two-year contract for funding. Our 24/7 service providers for our phones, internet, and IT require three-year contracts, and when we only have stable funding for two years at a time the contracts are a risk to sign.

We did receive a one-time grant from the state from federal funds for a planning grant for 988. We just received notice of another one-time grant from the state with federal funds in the amount of \$458,000 to strengthen 988 collaborations and infrastructure. The funding for this one-time grant will end on 4/29/2024. This funding was given out by SAMHSA with messaging that it will help 988 centers financially with the hope that they will find consistent state funding when this grant period is over. We constantly watch and apply for federal grants, but they are competitive to write and are usually for short-term funding to add a particular program, not to pay day-to-day operating costs.

The states of Washington, Virginia, Colorado, Nevada, and California all have implemented and passed a 988 user fee bill and have been having great results.

Let me know what questions you have as you decide on amendments.

Yours truly,

Jennifer Illich  
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